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Review of the achievements in the implementation and results of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s

Renewal of commitment and future action for children in the next decade

Letter dated 7 May 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As the representative of the State which chairs the statutory bodies of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), I have the honour to transmit the text of an address by the Chairman of the CIS Executive Committee and Executive Secretary, Mr. Y. Yarov (annex I), and the text of the concluding document of the Conference of CIS member States on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on children, adopted in Minsk on 27 April 2001 (annex II).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annexes circulated as an official document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, under agenda items 8 and 9.

(*Signed*) Sergey Lavrov

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Annexes to the letter dated 7 May 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Annex I

Address by Mr. Yuri Yarov, Chairman of the Executive Committee and Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States

More than 10 years have elapsed since the adoption of commitments at the World Summit for Children to ensure a better future for the children of the world.

Constant attention is being paid to issues of child welfare in the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This has been particularly evident in recent years, as exemplified by the adoption, by the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, of model laws "On additional guarantees of social protection for orphans and children deprived of parental care" and "On basic guarantees of children's rights".

The decision "On child welfare in the CIS member States", signed by the CIS Council of Heads of Government on 30 November 2000, has become a significant element in the socio-political life of our countries and has led to an intensification of the work of State structures and public organizations on children's issues. In accordance with this decision, the year 2001 was proclaimed the Year of the Child in the CIS member States.

The Conference of representatives of CIS member States on preparations for the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, held from 26-27 April 2001 in Minsk, played an important role in consolidating the efforts of our countries in the interests of children. The final document of the Conference defines the priorities for the CIS member States in their activities to benefit children.

We are encouraged by the fact that the Berlin Commitment for Children of Europe and Central Asia recognizes the important contribution made by CIS to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, along with organizations of the United Nations system, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union.

At the same time, under the conditions of economies in transition, it is very important for the CIS countries to have international support, particularly from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies of the United Nations system, within the framework of specific programmes and projects. It is important to broaden the scope and increase the effectiveness of such support, taking into account national priorities.

The twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children is, in our view, closely connected with the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held on 8-12 April 2002 in Madrid. The quality of the childhood of those who are now beginning their lives will determine the future of the population of our countries in 50 years' time. I would like to believe that the decisions of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly will open up new perspectives for the peoples of the world.

Annex II

Concluding document of the Conference of States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on preparations for the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children, Minsk, 26-27 April 2001

The participants at the Conference noted the following:

1. Since the World Summit for Children, held in 1990, and the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, some progress has been achieved in their countries towards improving the situation of children and respecting their rights. However, the efforts in this field have been hampered by the negative trends which accompanied the political, social and economic changes associated with the establishment of a market economy and the consolidation of democracy. To date, attempts to reverse these negative trends have failed; there is a persistent gap between intentions and achievements in resolving the acute problems of childhood.

2. In their policies for achieving sustainable development, the Governments of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are attaching ever greater significance to children's issues and to implementing their commitments under international instruments in this field. Long-term programmes and plans of action for children designed to comprehensively address and resolve their problems have been formulated and are being implemented. The decision on child welfare in the CIS member States, adopted by the Council of Heads of Government on 30 November 2000, is of great importance in this connection.

3. A system for the legal protection of the interests of children under the new socio-economic conditions is being developed literally from scratch.

4. An important aspect of child-friendly policy is ensuring the humane treatment of children in vulnerable situations, including orphans, disabled children and child refugees.

5. The reduced possibilities, including budgetary and financial constraints, of State support for child welfare in countries with economies in transition prevent these countries from adequately performing the tasks set forth in their national development strategies and special programmes to improve the situation of children.

6. In view of the critical state of the economy and increasing poverty in the CIS countries, and unfavourable family circumstances, it is not possible to ensure conditions conducive to normal child development.

7. The general decline in child health, the growing number of disabled children, reduced access to and affordability of health services for children, the increasing prevalence of communicable diseases, particularly public health problems such as tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents, the spread of HIV/AIDS, reduced possibilities for adequate breast feeding and nutrition and deteriorating conditions for early child development are matters of particular concern.

8. A system of social services for children is being established and a network of rehabilitation institutions, shelters, mental health clinics and emergency social services is being developed. However, efforts to counter the spread of

negative social phenomena such as the growing number of homeless, neglected and orphaned children, the rise in juvenile delinquency, alcohol addiction, drug abuse, substance abuse and prostitution remain inadequate.

9. Various forms of family settings are being developed for children deprived of parental care.

10. In order to resolve the whole spectrum of childhood problems, increased efforts are being made to form and develop partnerships with non-governmental organizations, both in formulating policies and approaches to improve the situation of children and in initiating and carrying out activities and campaigns targeted at specific problems.

11. International support of national efforts to improve the situation of children is an additional means of contributing to the achievement of the goals which have been established, by mobilizing the required resources and expertise to formulate effective approaches. In some cases, cooperation programmes play an important part in resolving specific problems. It is important to ensure greater and more effective international cooperation within the framework of programmes and projects, and closer linkage with national priorities.

The participants at the Conference defined the following priority areas of activity in the interests of children:

- Improvement of legal protection for children and development of the juvenile justice system;
- Support for and development of the family as the natural nurturing environment for children;
- Ensuring safe motherhood and protection of the health of children and adolescents;
- Improvement of child nutrition and elimination of micronutrient deficiencies;
- Ensuring adequate upbringing, high-quality and affordable education, and child development;
- Support for children in particularly difficult circumstances;
- Implementation of measures for early child development (up to 5 years of age).

The following measures would help to attain the goals set forth in the national programmes of the CIS member States represented at the Conference:

1. The appropriation of adequate budgetary allocations to meet children's needs, including health care and education.

2. The greatest possible preservation of basic guarantees to ensure the well-being and development of children and minimize declines in living standards, within the limits of available resources; ensuring that children have unimpeded access to health care and education; development of various forms of economic support for families with children.

3. Strengthening public and civil society supervision of the implementation of programmes, plans and commitments; expansion of the system for monitoring and analysis of the status of children's problems at all levels, including the preparation of annual national reports on the situation of children.

4. Development of effective institutional mechanisms to help implement public policy in the interests of children.

Support for and development of the family

5. Formulation and implementation of effective measures to stabilize the family and create conditions for the normal physical, intellectual and emotional development of children.

6. Enhanced social support targeted at low-income families.

7. Extension of social and socio-educational services for families with children.

8. Establishment of a network of social and socio-educational institutions to support families and children in difficult life situations.

Social and legal aspects

9. Improvement of the legislative basis for ensuring children's rights and the development of policies in the interests of children; establishment of administrative, institutional and financial mechanisms for ensuring children's rights, and training of the required staff. Establishment and improvement of child welfare mechanisms at the central and local levels and development of an institution responsible for the rights of the child.

10. Establishment and development of the juvenile justice system, focusing on rehabilitation and reintegration, and resorting to punishment in the form of imprisonment as an exceptional measure, for the shortest possible time.

11. Adoption of legislative measures aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour.

12. Establishment of prevention and social rehabilitation mechanisms for children when new risks emerge: homelessness, increased violence against children, rise of drug and substance abuse, crime and forced displacement.

13. Adoption of measures to ensure the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to promote adherence to the Optional Protocols on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

Health care

14. Implementation of a range of medical, legal and socio-economic measures to control the increase in the number of disabled children and children with specific mental and physical development problems; development of modern medical facilities for the early diagnosis of deviations from normal mental and physical development.

15. Implementation of programmes to protect children and adolescents and safeguard their health, reduce infant and child mortality and morbidity caused by preventable diseases and accidents; improve the delivery of basic health care for children; and promote the involvement of parents in the proper treatment and prevention of childhood diseases.

16. Ensuring the accessibility, affordability and quality of health care for adolescents, including prevention of drug, tobacco and alcohol consumption, psycho-social rehabilitation, anonymous HIV testing, and the medico-social rehabilitation of children with reduced capabilities.

17. Ensuring the maintenance of a high level of child immunization, prevention of morbidity and mortality caused by measles, as well as the final eradication of poliomyelitis.

18. Adoption of effective measures to combat communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis, hepatitis and malaria, as well as sexually transmitted diseases.

19. Ensuring access to high-quality services in the field of reproductive health, including prenatal and obstetric care.

20. Application of the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) on live births.

21. Adoption of measures to combat iodine deficiency conditions, inter alia by ensuring that only iodized salt is supplied to retail distribution networks.

22. Formulation of national strategies to prevent iron-deficiency anaemia in children and women.

23. Implementation of integrated programmes to combat HIV/AIDS, including effective measures to prevent direct mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, special assistance to AIDS orphans, and also the promotion of psycho-social assistance to HIV-infected children and/or children with AIDS and the introduction of appropriate programmes into general education curricula.

Education

24. Ensuring the access of all children to high-quality education, including free basic education.

25. Guaranteeing that the special needs and right to education of children with limited capacities are met; encouragement of a process of education for peace, respect and tolerance of others.

26. Improvement of the quality of school education, including interactive teaching methods and the use of modern information and communication technologies (ICT). Ensuring the necessary conditions and environment for the full development of children's capacities, inculcating the knowledge and skills for a healthy lifestyle and reproductive health, nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, gender equality, and rejection of violence, particularly against children.

27. Adoption of measures to reduce the rate of children dropping out of school before completing their basic education.

28. Ensuring greater parental and community involvement in school administration.

29. Ensuring the wider participation of children in the resolution of issues that affect their well-being and development.

International cooperation and support

30. Further development and intensification of international bilateral and multilateral cooperation for the benefit of children, including cooperation within the framework of CIS.

31. Improvement of targeted interaction with international organizations, funds, programmes and United Nations specialized agencies (UNICEF, WHO and others) for the development and implementation of projects in the priority areas defined in national programmes and regional documents, as well as the expansion of donor support.

32. Better coordination of donor efforts at the national level in the interests of children. Improvement of the quality and effectiveness of project facilitation by donors.